POCKET COMPUTER NEWSLETTER

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July

SPECIAL ADVERTISERS EDITION

From time-to-time we put out special *Advertisers Editions* of *PCN*. These editions give vendors a chance to tell pocket computer enthusiasts about equipment, books and software that they have available.

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WHERE IS POCKET COMPUTING HEADED?

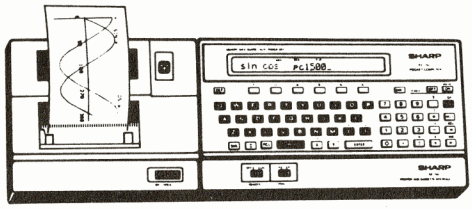
Towards better and better!

A number of industry observers feel that pocket computers represent a vast, still latent, market. One problem facing the industry right now is that the power of the new second-generation models is not understood and appreciated.

The fact of the matter is that models such as the Sharp PC-1500 and Radio Shack PC-2 fully rival the capabilities of the Radio Shack TRS-80 Model I (desktop-size) equipped with level II BASIC. Currently, the Radio Shack PC-2 (and Sharp PC-1500) pocket units can be equipped with 10K of user memory, and soon this will be increased to 18K. That is,

(continued on page 2)

PC-1500/CE-150



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it is now possible to have the equivalent of a TRS-80 desktop computer, with 18K of RAM memory (and a 16K version of BASIC in ROM), all in a unit complete with keyboard and display *that you can literally put in your pocket!* (OK, it should be a large pocket.)

I don't mean to imply that the Sharp PC-1500 and Radio Shack PC-2 are the only pocket computers with this kind of power. Another machine, which the manufacturer prefers to call a "hand-held computer" (as distinct from "pocket computer") has capabilities that closely rival that of the original APPLE II desktop computer. That is the Panasonic/Quasar HHC. This unit can be coupled to devices that give it full communications capability with remote mainframes, the ability to display color graphics on a TV or video monitor, expand user memory to as much as 56 kilobytes, utilize various versions of high level languages and more!

It is evident in my conversations with many people that even long-time computer users are unaware of the true capabilities of the newer PC and HHC models. A few of these people glanced at the earlier PC models, were unimpressed, and have since dismissed the little portables as of insignificant consequence. These people may be making big mistakes.

Even if you have a "big" desktop computer, the new PCs can be a lot of help. In the first place, they are ridiculously cheap considering their raw computing power. Indeed, a 10K (user memory) Sharp PC-1500 can be obtained for as little as $400.00 (or less) these days. Now, I hardly need to tell experienced computer users that you can fit a pretty fair sized BASIC program in a machine having 10K of memory. In fact, you can fit a whole bunch of programs in 10K of memory. Secondly, these little units are highly portable. You can literally carry these babies around with you wherever you go! That means you have access to substantial computing power virtually anytime you need it. Do you commute to work? There may be an hour or two of time a day wherein you could profitably utilize a PC. Do you frequently wish you could take your office computer home some evenings to continue working on a program (or take your home computer to work)? If you are programming in BASIC, you can keep right on working on many types of application problems using your PC.

But, that is not the only good part about having a PC handy. You can often put it to excellent use right alongside a desktop computer! How many times have you been using one type of program on your desktop unit – say a spreadsheet program – and you realize you really need to do some fairly comprehensive computing just to figure out what it is you want to put into the spreadsheet? Now, you don't want to save the current spreadsheet file in memory, dump the spreadsheet program, load in a different program to determine the input information you were seeking, crank that stuff out, dump that program, load the spreadsheet handler back in, call up the spreadsheet file you were working on, etc. You figure it is too much trouble, you might forget where you were, what you were doing, etc. So you "fudge it." Well, you wouldn't have to if you had a little PC by your side for handing just those types of situations.

Personally, I find a pocket computer ideal as a programming "idea evaluator." I make my living essentially by being a computer programmer. That means my professional life revolves around solving programming "problems." I have found that ideas for solutions to programs I am typically working on can come at all hours of the day or night. In the past, I know that many an idea wandered in – and then out – of my brain for lack of the means to quickly ascertain whether the idea made any real sense or had practical value *by actually testing the algorithm at the time the idea occurred.* A lot of these kinds of ideas now get "captured." Right in my PC. Regardless of where I am. Now, when I have a few spare moments and a new idea pops up, I can immediately evaluate the idea in practice by keying in the algorithm and giving it a work out. Believe me, I have come up with more than a few "winners" the past year or two because of this capability. The success rate has been even better since having the power of the PC-1500 by my side.

I can state, without reservation, that the use of a PC has been a great boon to increasing my overall programming and professional productivity. I expect the benefits will be getting better with time, primarily because the PC units themselves will be offering more and more capability.

The essence of the PC is its *personal adaptability and portability.* That is, it can be tailored exclusively to fit an individual's specific needs and it is small enough to be transported so that it is essentially always available. It thus truly becomes a personal "mind servant."

We are now at a technological stage where there are a lot of arguments revolving around just what is truly portable. Does a unit have to fit in a pocket? In a purse? Or, is "briefcase" portability enough? There is a lot to be said on both sides of the argument. True, the smaller something is, the more physically transportable it appears to be. However, if the device becomes too small, the physical inputting and outputting process can become a serious problem. Briefcase-size units typically offer better displays and superior keyboards. But visual displays and finger-operated keyboards might be meaningless in ten years if voice pattern recognition is perfected.

Right now, however, visual/manual methods prevail, so the physical limit to "smallness" hinges on such matters as practical sizes for keyboards and displays. However, at any given size, the prospects look good for having more and more capability! Multi-line liquid-crystal displays are now being introduced. Bubble memories will soon yield hand-held units with one-quarter to one-half a megabyte of memory and more. Units will soon have built-in modems for communicating over phone lines. The list of features expands as technology crams more and more into less and less space.

Technology will provide ever greater capabilities as sales of portable units provide the impetus that designers and investors need to spur them to greater efforts. Right now, demand for "pocket computers" is relatively light. Yet, the demand for "personal desktop" units is strong. This in itself stands as proof that the capabilities of the newer PCs are not yet fully understood by the public. I predict this will soon change. The future for PC users looks good. *– Nat Wadsworth, Editor*

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PC-1500/CE-150 Service Manual			10
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A NEWSLETTER FOR POCKET COMPUTER USERS

This timely, compact publication provides up to the minute information on pocket computers, including models such as the Radio Shack TRS-80 PC-1 and PC-2, Sharp Electronic's PC-1500 and PC-1211, Casio, Panasonic/Quasar HHCs, and others as they are announced. We only cover PCs capable of executing a high level language such as BASIC.

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